

# **THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE NUCLEAR POSTURE REVIEW FOR EXTENDED DETERRENCE**

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Before

**The Conference of Monterey Institute of International Studies on**

**U.S.-Japan Cooperation on  
Arms Control, Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Verification**

March 27, 2002

Based on public statements and media reports regarding the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), which itself remains a classified document, it is clear that the Bush Administration sees extended deterrence as an essential element of U.S. security policy. Assistant Secretary of Defense J.D. Crouch stated as much in his January 9<sup>th</sup> Pentagon briefing on the NPR. Specifically, that briefing revealed that the Bush Administration wants to maintain “credible non-nuclear and nuclear response options to support U.S. commitments.” It also revealed that the Administration sees U.S. nuclear forces as a source of reassurance for the allies. Thus, there is no question that the Bush Administration wants to maintain the policy of extended deterrence. The questions that remain are:

- 1) How does the policy of extended deterrence change as a result of the NPR?  
and
- 2) Will the extended deterrence policy established by the NPR effectively respond to allied security requirements, as well as those for the U.S., in the post-Cold War world?

## **EXTENDED DETERRENCE TRANSFORMED**

While there is no doubt that the NPR preserves the policy of extended deterrence, it seeks to adapt the policy to the requirements of the post-Cold War world. In essence, the NPR will transform extended deterrence. This should come as no surprise as the NPR also seeks to transform the broader policies of strategic and nuclear deterrence, within which the policy of extended deterrence has been and remains embedded. Specifically, there are eight elements of the NPR that result in substantive changes to the previous policy of Cold War era extended deterrence. They are:

**Element #1: A capabilities-based approach.** The Department of Defense has focused broader defense policy on what it calls a capabilities-based approach. This was originally explained in the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and has now been applied more specifically to nuclear weapons in the NPR. The capabilities-based approach represents an effort to make U.S. defense policy relevant to the post-Cold War environment. It replaces the threat-based approach of the Cold War. During the Cold War, the U.S. focused on the Soviet threat and its relatively clear and predictable trend lines. The static nature of the U.S.-Soviet rivalry meant that defense policy did not require a great deal of flexibility. The emphasis in that era was on offensive nuclear armaments and not defensive systems. All of these aspects of the threat-based approach were found in the extended deterrence policy of that era.

Extended deterrence under a capabilities-based approach recognizes that the U.S. can no longer focus on a single and relatively familiar threat represented by a specific country. Rather, certain capabilities that are in hands of a variety of countries potentially hostile to the U.S. and its allies are necessarily the focus of concern. The new extended deterrence policy also recognizes that the world is generally less predictable than during the Cold War, and therefore the policy needs to be more flexible and adaptable. The capabilities-based approach also means that extended deterrence policy will not be so focused on nuclear weapons. Conventional and defensive weapons will play a greater role.

**Element #2: A new triad.** During the Cold War, the U.S. relied on a triad of nuclear forces to support deterrence. The old triad consisted of land-based missiles, submarine-based missiles, and strategic bombers, all capable of delivering nuclear weapons. The NPR proposes a new triad to replace the one of the Cold War era. This new triad will consist of the three types of offensive arms included in the old triad (both nuclear- and conventionally-armed), defensive systems, and a responsive infrastructure for addressing unexpected developments. Contrary to recent press reports, which leave the impression that the NPR will leave U.S. defense policy more reliant on nuclear arms, the new triad will reduce U.S. dependence on nuclear arms to maintain deterrence. This is because conventionally-armed offensive weapons and non-nuclear defensive arms will play significant roles in maintaining deterrence.

**Element #3: A smaller strategic nuclear force.** Since the new triad will reduce reliance on nuclear arms, it allows for a significant reduction in the number of deployed nuclear warheads. The U.S. has roughly 6,000 deployed warheads today. By the end of ten years, the Administration plans to retain a force of between 1,700 and 2,200 warheads.

It is important to keep in mind, particularly for the concept of extended deterrence, that these numbers are not driven by an exclusive focus on Russia, but on addressing global deterrence requirements. The policy recognizes that deterring other countries capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction is vitally important to the security of the U.S. and its allies. Recent press reports on the content of the classified report point out that specific countries that have been named in it. While this has been

interpreted by some as the U.S. adopting a policy of nuclear threats toward the countries that are mentioned, I believe that this represents reasonable contingency planning. More importantly, U.S. allies should take note of the fact that the policy focuses U.S. deterrent capabilities on countries that in most instances pose a more immediate threat to its allies than to U.S. territory.

Traditionally, the U.S. has been reluctant to discuss openly the number of tactical nuclear weapons it has in its arsenal. The NPR, on the basis of what I have seen, is also silent on this issue. Nevertheless, I think it is safe to assume that the NPR continues to see tactical nuclear weapons as a necessary ingredient in its overall deterrence policy and particularly in its policy of extended deterrence.

**Element #4: Extending the life of nuclear delivery systems.** The U.S. has a fleet of nuclear delivery systems that is aging. The Minuteman III missiles have an average of 26 years. Trident II (D-5) missiles have an average age of nine years. The B-52 bombers have an average age of 40 years, while the B-2s have an average age of five years. The NPR makes it clear that the Administration intends to undertake a systematic program for sustaining the lives of these delivery systems. Maintaining the effectiveness of these delivery systems is absolutely necessary to maintaining deterrence generally and extended deterrence in particular.

**Element #5: Maintaining the option to conduct explosive nuclear tests.** The U.S. conducted its last explosive nuclear test in 1992. While the Clinton Administration argued that the U.S. could maintain the safety and reliability of the nuclear weapons in its stockpile indefinitely without explosive testing, the validity of the assertion remains in doubt. Further, the Clinton Administration policy regarding nuclear testing failed to address the question of the need to maintain the military effectiveness of nuclear weapons in the face of changing requirements. The Bush Administration intends to maintain the existing moratorium on explosive testing for the time being. On the other hand, it is clear that the Administration will not allow the moratorium to lead to an atrophied force that undermines the U.S. deterrent posture.

**Element #6: Incorporating non-nuclear and defensive forces into the deterrent posture.** The NPR would expand the existing nuclear triad by adding non-nuclear strike weapons, missile defense, and command and control, intelligence, and planning capabilities to the mix. In the realm of non-nuclear strike weapons, the Department of Defense is exploring conventional weapons that will destroy hard and deeply-buried targets and converting four Trident submarines to cruise missile carriers. In the area of missile defense, the Administration is developing a layered system of global scope. This development effort will explore the full range of technologies and basing modes. The global scope of the system is designed to provide protection to U.S. allies, as well as U.S. territory. The command and control, intelligence and planning functions will serve to upgrade communications, improve intelligence technology to support strategic forces, and allow Strategic Command to apply an adaptive planning program. All these measures will increase the flexibility and adaptability of U.S. strategic forces in a world where the precise nature of the threat is not known and likelihood of surprise is high.

**Element #7: Modernization of the nuclear force.** Aside from the service life extension programs for nuclear weapons, discussed earlier, the Department of Defense is also exploring a number of options for modernizing the force. These include a next-generation ICBM capable of destroying relocatable targets, a follow-on strategic submarine to replace the Trident as they begin retirement in 2029, a new SLBM for the follow-on strategic submarine (which could include the option for a common ICBM/SLBM), upgrades to the existing B-52 and B-2 bomber fleet for improving electronic countermeasures, situational awareness, and communications, and a follow-on strategic bomber. While these modernization plans and programs are for strategic systems, they can play a role in extended deterrence.

More directly relevant to extended deterrence, are modernization plans for the tactical nuclear force. These plans include options for maintaining dual-capable aircraft. One option is to extend the service life of the dual capable F-16C/Ds and F-15Es. Another option is to make the Joint Strike Fighter dual-capable.

The purposes of these modernization plans are also detailed in the NPR. They are to destroy hardened and deeply-buried targets, destroy relocatable targets, defeat chemical and biological agents, and improve accuracy to reduce collateral damage. All of these purposes are directly applicable to strengthening extended deterrence.

**Element #8: A balanced arms control policy.** While the U.S. is clearly going to reduce its strategic nuclear arsenal in accordance with either a formal or informal arrangement with Russia, it will not do so at the expense of either its general deterrence policy or its extended deterrence policy. For example, the U.S. will not bring the START II Treaty into force because conditions attached to the accord by the Russian Duma are incompatible with the new triad. The U.S. will not “de-alert” its nuclear force, but rather use defensive and non-nuclear forces for addressing the risks associated with accidental or unauthorized launches. The Administration seems to be de-emphasizing the “negative security assurances” declaration of earlier administrations. This means the U.S. may reserve the option of responding with nuclear weapons against biological and chemical attacks. Finally, the Bush Administration will not ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) because it believes that the U.S. must preserve the option to conduct explosive tests to assure the safety, reliability, and military effectiveness of the weapons in the stockpile.

## EXTENDING EXTENDED DETERRENCE

Given the array of plans and programs proposed by the NPR, at least as I understand them, it is clear that it is the intention of the Bush Administration to preserve the policy of strategic deterrence in general and extended deterrence in particular. This is not to say, as is made obvious by the Administration’s pronouncements on the NPR, that strategic deterrence or extended deterrence will remain as they were during the Cold War. The Administration wants make both more flexible, adaptable, and relevant to the needs

of the post-Cold War world. The relevant questions for extended deterrence in particular are whether the Bush Administration's planned changes will succeed in making the policy relevant to today's security environment and well into the future and what that means for U.S.-Japanese security cooperation.

My view is that the Administration has got it about right. No ally, including Japan, should come away from this report believing that the U.S. is no longer prepared to use the full array of military capabilities at its disposal to respond to an attack on it with weapons of mass destruction. Equally, no nation hostile to the U.S. and its allies should come away from this report believing that it can attack a U.S. ally with weapons of mass destruction without putting its regime in mortal peril. Indeed, I believe that the NPR will enhance extended deterrence because it will allow for a wider variety of responses and should convince those hostile to the U.S. and its allies that the U.S. has responsive options that it will not hesitate to use under appropriate circumstances, including defensive and conventional options. Some would like us to believe that deterrence can be conceptually separated from war plans. This assertion fails to understand the inherent nature of deterrence. Deterrence requires convincing an enemy that you not only have overwhelming military power, but that you will use that power to meet particular military and political objectives. The NPR, therefore, serves to enhance extended deterrence. Let me give you the specific reasons why.

**Reason #1: The capabilities-based approach adapts extended deterrence to a less unpredictable world.** During the Cold War, deterrence operated in a relatively static environment and was threat-based. The focus was on a single, large-scale threat that had a consistent pattern of behavior. Deterrence served to define the scope of acceptable behavior on each side in clearly understood ways. Indeed, it fostered stability by limiting flexibility on both sides. Extended deterrence, as an embedded function of general deterrence, sought to define the scope of acceptable behavior in specific geographic regions.

Today, the U.S. and its allies can no longer focus on a single threat. There are a multitude of potential threats that may materialize with little warning. Whereas the threat-based approach of the Cold War saw little value in flexibility – indeed, may have even seen flexibility as destabilizing in some ways – the capabilities-based approach puts a high value on flexibility. This is appropriate, particularly for extended deterrence. The U.S. and its allies cannot precisely measure the hostile intent of both state and non-state actors. What they can measure is the kind capabilities any potentially hostile actor may bring to bear. This results in the need to develop forces geared to countering these capabilities, regardless of where and under what circumstances they may materialize. The NPR directs U.S. strategic forces to develop in the direction of meeting these capabilities. Further, it enhances extended deterrence for two reasons. First, the forces it envisions, being designed to counter emerging capabilities worldwide, serves to reduce the likelihood hostile actors will use those capabilities against the U.S. or its allies. Second, the overall extended deterrent posture is being designed with flexibility in mind. It will give political leaders the widest array of response options possible. In the kind of volatile, even chaotic, security environment we see today, this flexibility helps to ensure

that extended deterrence is relevant to an emerging threat that we cannot precisely foresee or define today. The challenge for the U.S. and Japan is to agree on the list of capabilities against which U.S. deterrent forces can be used to counter.

**Reason #2: The new triad broadens extended deterrence.** During the Cold War, extended deterrence focused on using the enormous explosive power of nuclear weapons to convince the Soviet Union that an attack on U.S. would carry an unacceptable cost. In a world where we see highly dispersed hostile forces and its not clear in all instances what these hostile forces may value, nuclear forces have less efficacy. This is not to say that nuclear forces are irrelevant, but that that extended deterrence requires that augmenting nuclear forces with other forces. The NPR defines these other forces, the context of a new triad, as conventional strike arms, defenses, and a responsive infrastructure. The new triad will improve the chances that U.S. and allied forces will have the means to meet an unexpected threat that materializes, and thereby diminish the likelihood the threat will be realized. If the U.S. limited itself to the existing triad, with its emphasis on nuclear weapons, it could well find itself in a circumstance that a nuclear response to a particular threat is inappropriate, and extended deterrence collapses as a result. Clearly, a large nuclear force will not deter an attack by a force capable of mingling with a population of innocent civilians in an allied country. Other means of deterrence must be found and the new triad will provide them. Japan needs to understand that that a smaller nuclear force does not imply a weaker extended deterrence policy.

**Reason #3: Sizing the nuclear force according to a global target set enhances extended deterrence.** Much of the discussion of nuclear weapons in recent months has been about reductions in the size of the U.S. force. Overlooked in the discussion, however, is the fact that this reduction is facilitated by an emerging shift in targeting policy. The U.S. is no longer going to size its nuclear force according to meeting targeting requirements predominantly derived from an assumed hostile relationship with Russia. I interpret this to mean that the U.S. is edging towards a targeting policy that is directly related to the capabilities-based approach. It will focus on countering those capabilities, regardless of what country or non-state actor may possess them, that pose a significant risk to U.S. and allied interests. By assuming a global perspective in targeting, the U.S. is moving toward a nuclear posture that is more relevant to the security of its allies because the capabilities the nuclear weapons will strive to hold at risk are at least as much a potential threat to the allies as the U.S. Thus, a global nuclear targeting policy will strengthen extended deterrence. The U.S. will have a responsibility to Japan and other allies, however, to provide them a general outline of the kind of targets that the new U.S. policy will hold at risk.

**Reason #4: Nuclear modernization will ensure that the force remains capable of supporting extended deterrence.** Modernizing military forces, nuclear or conventional, is akin to riding a bicycle. Either you keep moving forward or you fall over. Either the U.S. continues to modernize its nuclear force or the force will atrophy to point that it no longer makes a material contribution to its military capabilities. To oppose nuclear modernization is to support *de facto* nuclear disarmament. Thus, those who argue against the U.S. modernizing its nuclear force, in essence, support a policy that at some point in

the future will result in a nuclear force that is irrelevant to the needs of deterrence, extended or otherwise. The NPR demonstrates the Bush Administration's commitment to continuing the policy of extended deterrence by putting an array on nuclear modernization efforts on the table and saying that it is prepared to consider the resumption of nuclear testing in order to retain a safe, reliable, and effective nuclear force. This is why it is also wise that the Administration has stated its opposition to ratification and entry into force of the CTBT in the NPR. The CTBT would effectively bar the U.S. from designing and building new nuclear weapons and modernizing the force. Japan and the U.S., therefore, may wish to discuss alternatives to the CTBT. One might be an option for amending the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) by including a testing prohibition in it.

**Reason #5: The NPR sees defense and deterrence as complementary.** Cold War deterrence policy, wrongly in my view, saw defenses as incompatible with deterrence. This is because the policy of that era, called mutually assured destruction or MAD, saw vulnerability as a necessary ingredient to strategic stability. Vulnerability was deemed a virtue. Defenses, because they lessened vulnerability, were deemed to be inherently destabilizing. In my view, vulnerability itself was a source of instability because it gave Soviet war planners realistic options for seeking a first strike capability. The U.S. weathered this threat by working to preserve a survivable retaliatory nuclear force by posturing the force appropriately and exploiting survivable basing modes. In the bilateral confrontation of the Cold War, these steps were adequate to maintaining deterrence and stability.

Now, the U.S. finds itself in a multi-polar environment and the question the Bush Administration faced directly was whether to multilateralize MAD. Such a policy would allow any country that wants to do so, including China, India, Iran, Iraq, and North Korea, to achieve an assured destruction capability against the U.S. The Bush Administration recognized that the multilateralization of MAD would undermine stability because the complexity of managing offense-only deterrence in a multi-polar setting of powers of uneven strength is too great. It also recognized that this would defeat U.S. non-proliferation goals. Allowing rogue countries an assured destruction capability will not only encourage them to obtain nuclear weapons, it would encourage them to obtain quite sizeable arsenals. This is why the NPR makes defenses one of the three legs in the new triad. Opposite to Cold War thinking, defenses are seen as a necessary ingredient to deterrence. The NPR goes on to link the defensive leg of the new triad to extended deterrence. This is because the Administration's missile defense program aims to provide a defensive deterrent to U.S. allies, as well as to the U.S. itself. This is why continued U.S.-Japanese cooperation in the field of missile defense is so important.

**Reason #6: Arms control will be tailored to the requirements for updating and strengthening deterrence.** The NPR recognizes that arms control plays an important role in maintaining security by reducing the scope of the threat. It envisions reductions in the size of the deployed strategic nuclear arsenal to between 1,700 and 2,200 warheads. By the same token, it will avoid the pitfalls in arms control that would undermine realization of the new triad and its essential contributions to extended deterrence in the

post-Cold War world. Specifically, the U.S. is withdrawing from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. The Treaty would otherwise block the deployment of the defensive leg of the new triad. The Treaty will cease to restrain U.S. missile defense development and deployment programs in mid-June. The determination to preserve the defensive leg of the new triad is reinforced by the NPR's finding that the U.S. will not ratify the START II Treaty.

The Bush Administration has also used the NPR to announce that it has no intention of ratifying or bringing into force the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. This means that the U.S. is getting off the path of nuclear disarmament, which will serve to preserve the nuclear leg of the new triad for the foreseeable future.

Third, the Administration is de-emphasizing the "negative security assurances" declaration. If applied fully, this declaration might bar a nuclear response to an attack with biological or chemical agents. The experience with Iraq during the Persian Gulf War suggests that a nuclear deterrent is effective against those foreign leaders who otherwise may choose to attack U.S. and allied forces with biological or chemical weapons. As a result, it is wise for the U.S. to maintain a policy of ambiguity regarding the potential use of nuclear weapons.

Fourth, it seems clear that the Administration will avoid negotiations on an agreement that would restrain conventionally-armed strategic offensive arms. Thus, this element of the offensive leg of the new triad will also be preserved.

Finally, the Administration is clear that it will retain a responsive force. This includes the storing of certain warheads downloaded from existing delivery systems as it moves toward a smaller nuclear arsenal. This will serve to bolster the final leg of the new triad, which includes a wide array of weapons and programs to support a responsive deterrent posture.

Just as the NPR is seeking to transform deterrence, it also implies a need to transform arms control. In this context, there is a need for the U.S. to consult with the Japanese about where to go with arms control. Such consultations could lead the U.S. and Japan, along with other U.S. allies, to propose opening a second track in arms control for stemming proliferation. The existing track is represented by the global agreements and the attempts to obtain universal participation in them. These agreements include the NPT, the BWC, and the CWC. The second track would explore comprehensive arms control on a regional level. A prime candidate for opening a second track is the Korean Peninsula. The purpose of this second track would be to obtain a general agreement to posture forces in a way that short-notice attacks are less likely. Initially, such an agreement could be modeled on the confidence-building measures agreement in Europe born out of the Helsinki process. An additional step could see an agreement modeled after the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, although it need not be limited to conventional armaments.

## CONCLUSION

As it relates to extended deterrence, the NPR balances continuity and change. The central enduring principle is that extended deterrence remains necessary to support U.S. security commitments to its friends and allies around the world. Clearly, the Bush Administration is using the NPR to reassure the allies that the U.S. remains committed to their security. Another enduring principle is that a robust U.S. nuclear capability is a barrier to, not an incentive for, nuclear proliferation. Such a capability will reduce the risk that specific allies will consider obtaining their own nuclear arsenals to make up for perceived weaknesses in U.S. capabilities. It will also serve to discourage would-be hostile states from concluding that they can obtain and use nuclear weapons against the U.S. or its allies without risking a devastating response.

What has changed with the NPR is that extended deterrence is no longer so dependent on nuclear weapons. Defensive and conventional weapons will play a more central role. Further, a responsive force will increase the ability of the U.S. to adapt extended deterrence to rapidly changing circumstances by increasing flexibility. Extended deterrence, as a result, will be better positioned to handle strategic surprises. In short, what the NPR has produced is an extended deterrence policy that reflects the more fluid security environment of the post-Cold War world.